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October 22, 1984

Free Press

# Students Allege WMPG "Controlled"

by Katherine V. Kreuter

*(Editor's Note: This week, we received two letters to the editor regarding WMPG and its director/advisor, Ernie Freeberg. The letters, one of which was unsigned, made several allegations we felt Freeberg should be given an opportunity to respond to.)*

According to a former member of the WMPG executive board, the campus radio station is under the "control" of director/advisor Ernie Freeberg, who believes students are "immature" and "irresponsible" and that they should allow non-students to have airshifts.

Don Connors, former business director of the radio station, says WMPG "has not always been the nice neat little family you are so used to hearing about." He claims Freeberg does not come from a communications background, that he had not worked in radio "for a sufficient amount of time" and does not "possess the necessary technical and administrative skills essential to running a radio station."

Though he admits Freeberg is "a good organizer and planner," he says Freeberg doesn't "look at what the students want or need."

Connors points out that the radio station is funded through the student activity fee. This

student activity, he says, he being taken away from students and given to non-students "and friends of the present administration."

Connors further charges Freeberg has removed him from the executive board and admits he is "bitter" as a result. "With all the work that I have done at WMPG and all the effort that I have put into making it a good working STUDENT ACTIVITY, I have paid my dues. Why haven't I been allowed to obtain the position that I deserve?"

He criticizes payment of a \$7,500 stipend to Freeberg under renewal of his original contract and claims "there were several competent people that could [have] effectively and efficiently managed the radio station" for less money.

Freeberg denies the allegations in Connors' letter, saying "that is not the case."

"The station is run by an executive board which ideally consists of five departments, each run by a student director who in turn appoints a manager," he explains. These ten members, plus the station's business manager and Freeberg as director/advisor, form the 12 members of the board under the station's constitution, which Freeberg helped write. He added that he does not have a vote in choosing who is and is not on the executive board.

Freeberg, who has four years of college radio experience at Middlebury College in Vermont and who has worked for the Maine Public Broadcasting Network and was hired by USM in the fall of 1982 as an advisor to the Student Communications Board. He was made director/advisor of the radio station in the fall of 1983.

At that time, Freeberg says, "the station was perceived to be in a total shambles with no organizational structure and, in the student senate's opinion, no sense of direction."

His contract was renewed last year when the senate approached him and asked him to stay on through the station's move to new studios in the Student Center in Gorham, Freeberg explains.

Regarding student and non-student involvement in planning and broadcasting, Freeberg says there are approximately 60 people working at WMPG.

Six of these are non-students who volunteer their time and talents to WMPG, Freeberg explains. Two of them, Joan Muldoon and Richard Cooke, are former students who have stayed on after graduation. The other four are Jim Pinfold, owner of Manassas Records and "an important promoter of jazz in the area," according to Freeberg; Richard Julio, who books bands at Geno's and who is "probably the most well-known agent for up-and-coming local talent," he says; Joel Eckhaus, a well-known folk musician who helped put together the folk stage at Maine Festival; and Peter Fillion, whom Freeberg describes

as an "outstanding" new wave music expert.

"These are people who have committed a tremendous amount of time to the radio station and give a great deal," Freeberg says.

Freeberg denies he thinks students are "immature" and "irresponsible." "College radio, in general, is more often than not immature and irresponsible," he says, "but it should not be."

